
HISTORIC PRESERVATION REVIEW BOARD
STAFF REPORT AND RECOMMENDATION

Property Address:	1742 Church Street, NW	Agenda
Landmark/District:	Dupont Circle Historic District	X Consent Calendar
		X Concept Review
Meeting Date:	July 26, 2012	X Alteration
H.P.A. Number:	12-280	New Construction
Staff Reviewer:	Steve Callcott	Demolition

Stoiber & Associates Architects, representing the Keegan Theatre Group, seeks on-going review for construction of a two-story addition on the side of a contributing building in the Dupont Circle Historic District.

When previously reviewed in May, the Board found the general concept for a side addition to be compatible but asked that its design be simplified, that the setback be restudied to allow for greater preservation of the building's articulated east side elevation, and that the new entrance be made more clearly legible from the street. While acknowledging that the existing front doors are not original, the Board recommended that some sense of the existing front entrance be retained, while leaving open the option of using this space as the location for sign boxes that could advertise theatre productions.

Proposal

Substantial revision to the concept has proven difficult due to zoning constraints and the building's tight interior plan. Expanding the size of the addition to provide for a more generous vestibule and/or pushing it further back along the side of the building resulted in the project exceeding the allowable lot occupancy (which would require the applicants to obtain zoning relief) and pushed the new internal circulation beyond the shallow front lobby into the theater space. To respond to the Board's concerns, the plan has been revised to relocate the entrance to the addition's front elevation (rather than the side) to make it more prominent; the entrance is now expressed as double doors rather than a single leaf. In the addition, the stair to the basement has been relocated to the center of the lobby, between the bathrooms, to provide for a more generous vestibule. The side wall of the addition has been slightly revised to be slightly undulating in rather than canted at an angle; the glass ribbons and marquee sign have also been pulled slightly tighter to the building. The addition remains setback 3'-7" from the primary façade, as it was previously.

Evaluation

While pushing the addition further back from the front wall of the building would have been the ideal design and preservation solution, it resulted in significant practical and procedural problems. Instead, with relatively modest changes, the proposal has improved both in compatibility and function. The larger and more prominent entrance improves the orientation of the addition to the street and to the existing building, while the wider entrance and relocation of basement stairs result in an improved circulation plan. By pulling the wavy glass fins closer to the side face of the

addition and eliminating the marquee that extended over the side yard, the proportions of the addition are more vertical and it appears more secondary to the building.

The installation of a light box for advertising theater productions within the original door opening maintains the centrality of the opening on the original elevation while making it clear that it is no longer an entrance.

As proposed, the solid wall that spans the width of the side yard at the rear of the addition appears somewhat forbidding, creating a dark, north-facing dead-end immediately adjacent to the addition. As the theater building was designed as a detached building, to improve the quality of light coming into this side yard, and to preserve views of the sky through the side yard, the HPO recommends that this wall be significantly lowered in height.

Recommendation

The HPO recommends that the Review Board:

- *Find the revised concept to be compatible with the character of the historic district;*
- *Direct the applicant to lower the height of the two-story wall spanning the side yard at the rear of the addition; and*
- *Delegate final approval to staff.*